

HUMMINGBIRD GARDENS



One good way to enjoy the company of hummingbirds is to plant a hummingbird garden. In addition to providing them a natural diet, a hummer garden is an excellent way to attract birds to your nearby feeder. Since hummingbirds feed by sight on regularly followed routes called trap lines, their inquisitive nature will quickly lead them to investigate any possible new source of food. Plan carefully and select varieties of plants that flower at successive dates; you will be rewarded with happy hummers throughout season.

Using pesticides around hummingbird plants is bad idea. Killing garden pests will also eliminate small insects hummingbirds rely upon for protein. In addition, hummers might directly ingest pesticides sprayed onto flowers, which could sicken or kill the birds. Remember: if you would not eat it yourself, do not feed it to a hummingbird (well maybe not bugs).

Since hummers, like most birds, have virtually no sense of smell, the flowers that attract them tend to have little or no fragrance, apparently directing their resources instead toward high visibility and nectar production. Cultivated hybrids often make much less nectar than wild strains.

In addition to food sources, convenient perching opportunities will make your yard more hospitable to hummingbirds. They spend about 80% of their time sitting on twigs, leaf stems, clotheslines, etc., between feeding forays and sorties against trespassing rivals.

Hummingbird migration is timed by combinations of many cues, both internal and external, such as genetically inherited migration clock and changes in weather patterns, daylight and ambient temperature. Your feeder being left out does not determine whether a bird stays or goes. However, that precious food source might mean life or death to a straggling hummingbird that braves it through the winter north of the tropics.

No one is exactly sure why some hummingbirds stay here while the rest migrate. Whatever their reason, over-wintering hummingbirds are not uncommon in Texas and having a winter hummer has been a joyful surprise to many who keep their feeders out year-round. Keep in mind though, that just as in any other time of year, deciding to feed winter hummers is a commitment to keeping food clean, available and fresh. A source of food that is contaminated or unreliable can be worse than no feeding at all. Keep in mind that a hard freeze can damage the feeder, so take it in if you expect temperatures below freezing.

FEEDERS

Hang feeders in shade, sheltered from wind.

Never use honey in feeders. Hummingbirds need a mixture of 1 part ordinary sugar to 4 parts water. Boil the mixture for 1-2 minutes and let it cool. This helps delay fermentation. Distilled water may be used instead of boiling to extend the time before spoiling. However, some researchers are concerned that distilled water lacks minerals that hummingbirds need and believe it would be prudent to add a pinch of sodium-free or “light” salt, both of which contain nutrients. **Do not** add salt to tap water. **Do not** add red food coloring to liquid. Hummingbird feeders often have colors that attract hummers and red food coloring is not needed. Store unused syrup in refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

It is critical to keep hummingbird feeders clean with every filling, flush feeder with hot tap water; a bottlebrush can be very helpful. **Do not use soap** – hummers apparently do not like the taste. Visually inspect the entire feeder for black mold; a bleach soak then a plain water rinse is the best way to remove mold. Discard any unconsumed sugar water – if birds are not emptying your feeder between cleanings, just partially refill it. If the sugar solution in your feeder turns cloudy, it is spoiled food and needs to be replaced. When the temperature is over 80°, clean and refill feeder every 3 or 4 days; over 90° it might spoil in 2 days.

Do not be guilty of poisoning a hummingbird by offering it tainted food. At least once a month, clean feeder thoroughly with solution of ¼ cup bleach to 1 gallon of water. Soak feeder in this solution for 1 hour, and then clean with bottlebrush. Rinse well with running water and refill.

Sugar water used to fill hummingbird feeders is only to supplement birds' natural diet. It is not necessary to buy commercial “nectar” mix that includes additional vitamins, protein, or other substances, because the birds get all they need from flower nectar and insects they consume.

Ants *will* find your feeder unless you take precautions. Some feeder models feature a built-in ant moat that may be filled with water; do not use oil, since other small birds like to drink from ant moats. You can make your own moat by running the hang wire through a hole in a spray can top (use a dab of silicone sealer or hot glue to seal hole). The best defense against ants is to paint the inside bottom of an ant moat with Tanglefoot, a very sticky goo sold at nurseries then install the moat open side down. This is extremely effective against ants, poses no risk of a bird getting stuck or contaminated and is low maintenance, since it keeps the goo from being compromised by rain and dust.

Do not use castor oil or duct tape around suction cups or on hanger wires. There is too much chance of a hummer brushing against it during feeder flights.

Bees, wasps, yellow jackets may be attracted to your feeder. Since many hummingbird feeders have yellow plastic “flowers” or other parts, try removing such parts or paint them red *before* hanging your feeder in the spring – once bees learn where food is, they fly right back to hive to tell their friends, so avoiding their attention up front works best.

If wasps persist, first try moving feeder, even just few feet and they will assume food source is gone. They may never find it in its new location while hummers will barely notice that it was moved. If that does not work, take feeder down for a day, or until you stop seeing wasps looking for it. You will see hummers looking for it, too, but they will not give up nearly as soon as wasps.



This partial list includes plants you may want to include as you build a landscape.



Common Name

Botanical Name

Annuals

Begonia	<i>Begonia x semperflorens</i>
Esperanza 'Gold Star' ☆	<i>Tecoma stans</i> 'Gold Star'
Firebush ☆	<i>Hamelia patens</i>
Four o' clocks	<i>Mirabilis Jalapa</i>
Geranium	<i>Pelargonium x hortorum</i>
Impatiens	<i>Impatiens wallerana</i>
Pentas	<i>Pentas lanceolata</i> (<i>P. carnea</i>)
Petunia	<i>Petunia x violacea</i>
Plumbago	<i>Plumbago auriculata</i>
Zinnia	<i>Zinnia elegans</i>

Bulbs, Corms, Rhizomes, Tubers

Cannas	<i>Cannaceae</i>
Daylily	<i>Hemerocallis</i>
Gladiolus	<i>Gladiolus</i>

Cacti, Succulents

Agave (Century plant) ☆	<i>Agave</i>
Yucca (red)	<i>Hesperaloe parviflora</i>

Fruits, Nuts and Berries

Pomegranate	<i>Punica granatum</i>
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Herbs

Bee balm	<i>Monarda didyma</i>
Oregano	<i>Origanum vulgare</i>
Rosemary	<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>



Perennials

Acanthus, flame ✚
 Aster, fall
 Butterfly weed ☆
 Cardinal flower
 Columbine 'Texas Gold' ☆ ✚
 Daisy, michaelmas
 Daisy, shasta
 Gaura
 Goldenrod
 Hibiscus, hardy ☆
 Heuchera:
 ' Coral bells'
 ' Purple palace'
 Joe Pye weed
 Lamb' ear
 Lantana ☆
 Penstemon, beard tongue
 Phlox ☆
 Pincushion flower
 Red-hot poker, torch lily

Sages:

 'Blue anise'
 'Indigo Spires'
 ' Mealy blue' ☆
 ' Mexican bush' ✚
 'Russian'
 ' Texas, Cenizo' ☆
 Salvia greggii (autumn sage) ☆
 St. John's wort

Thrift (Moss pink, Creeping phlox)
 Turk's cap ☆ ✚

Anisacanthus quadrifidus, v. wrightii
Aster oblongifolius
Asclepias tuberosa
Lobelia cardinalis
Aquilegia chrysantha
Aster novi-belgii
Leucanthemum x superbum
Gaura lindheimeri, Gaura coccinea
Solidago rugosa
Hibiscus moscheutos

Heuchera sanguinea
Heuchera micrantha
Eupatorium maculatum
Stachys byzantina
Lantana x hybrida
Penstemon
Phlox paniculata
Scabiosa columbaria 'Butterfly Blue'
Kniphofia uvaria

Salvia guaranitica
Salvia 'Indigo Spires'
Salvia farinacea
Salvia leucantha
Perovskia atriplicifolia
Leucophyllum frutescens
Salvia greggii
Hypericum perforatum

Phlox subulata
Malvaviscus arboreus

Shrubs

Abelia 'Edward Goucher'
 Abelia (glossy)
 Althea (Rose of Sharon)
 Butterfly bush

Abelia grandiflora 'Edward Goucher'
Abelia x grandiflora
Hibiscus syriacus
Buddleja davidii

Forsythia
 Hydrangea
 ‘Oak leaf’
 ‘Panicle’
 Quince (Flowering)
 Spiraea ‘Anthony Waterer’
 Spiraea ‘Bridal wreath’
 St. John’s wort
 Vitex (Chaste tree) ☆ 🇹🇽
 Weigela

Forsythia x intermedia
Hydrangea macrophylla
Hydrangea quercifolia
Hydrangea paniculata
Chaenomeles japonica
Spiraea japonica
Spiraea cantoniensis
Hypericum perforatum
Vitex agnus-castus
Weigela florida

Trees

Bird-of-paradise 🇹🇽
 Willow (desert) 🇹🇽

Caesalpinia gilliesii
Chilopsis linearis

Vines

Allamanda
 Clematis
 Crossvine
 Cypress vine
 Honeysuckle:
 ‘Coral’ 🇹🇽 ☆
 ‘Pam’s Pink’
 Jessamine, Carolina
 Morning glory
 Trumpet vine ‘Madame Galen’

Allamanda cathartica
Clematis
Bignonia capreolata
Ipomea quamoclit

Lonicera sempervirens
Lonicera x Americana
Gelsemium sempervirens
Ipomea
Campsis tagliabuana ‘Madame Galen’

☆ **Texas SuperStar**

🇹🇽 **Texas Native**